

This policy paper forms part of UN-HABITAT'S *Global Campaign on Urban Governance*. The Campaign fosters the implementation of the Habitat Agenda goal of achieving sustainable human settlements in an urbanising world. Improving urban governance has been recognised internationally as one of the crucial steps towards the eradication of poverty. The Campaign's aim, therefore, is to raise awareness of, and advocate for, good urban governance around the world, and to increase the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good governance in urban settings .

The overall purpose of this policy paper is to stimulate and promote dialogue and action by outlining the arguments for giving children and youth a far greater role in urban governance. It sets out the background to the growing problems that beset children and youth in urban environments, the urgency of the need for action, and the arguments for supporting their participation in urban governance, including those based on their human rights.



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GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON URBAN GOVERNANCE

POLICY DIALOGUE SERIES:

Number 2

YOUTH, CHILDREN AND URBAN GOVERNANCE



November 2004



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November 2004.

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Policy Dialogue Series

HS/728/04

ISBN: 92-1-131713-4

FOREWORD

The development challenges the world faces today, such as rapid population growth, inadequate shelter, unsustainable environment, devastating pandemics and widespread insecurity, are increasingly concentrated in our towns and cities. These challenges have a far-reaching impact on the well-being of the urban population and particularly on youths. Young people and children constituting more than 50 per cent of the total population of the world, and almost 60 per cent of the population in developing countries, tend to be silent sufferers. Not given a voice and a choice, they carry the burden of inadequate shelter and services and lack of opportunities, often with great dignity.

The Habitat Agenda, a global plan of action developed at the HABITAT-II Conference in Istanbul in 1996, is a path-breaking blueprint which has laid the foundation for the development of local multi-stakeholder partnerships, to realise safer, healthier, cleaner and equitable cities for all. The Habitat Agenda provides a new challenge to stakeholders, including young people, to reorganise themselves and build their institutional capacity towards participating in a more meaningful way in local development.

Many cities in our rapidly urbanising world exhibit an intensification of social exclusion, denying the benefits of urban life to youth. There is growing youth unemployment, changes in family patterns, increasing income disparities, increasing migration, the recruitment of child soldiers, the impact of AIDS and HIV, and the virtual exclusion of large sections of populations living in informal settlements or stigmatised neighbourhoods. Young people are especially vulnerable to such problems because they often do not have access to decision-making forums. We need to strive, therefore, for truly inclusive cities, which allow for the participation of all stakeholders in matters that affect their present and future well being. As citizens who have the most potential, but also who are most vulnerable, children and young people need to be acknowledged as

key partners in decision-making processes. In this regard, no effort should be spared in building and improving the capacity of children, youth and their organizations. This is one of the key messages that the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) is sending to governments and to all its partners.

Through its twin Global Campaigns on Urban Governance and Security of Tenure, and its wide-ranging portfolio of global programmes addressing issues such as urban poverty reduction, crime prevention and access to basic services like water, sanitation and waste, UN-HABITAT is supporting the implementation of the Habitat Agenda at local, national and regional levels. Strategic and operational partnerships with government, local authorities, non-governmental and community based organizations, the private sector, youth, women and UN agencies are crucial to the success of these efforts.

The Global Campaign on Urban Governance in particular, working closely with the Safer Cities Programme, provides an opportunity for young people, especially those at risk, to explore and develop new methods for a community-centred approach to citizenship. The Campaign offers an opportunity as well as the means to stimulate a culture of inclusion in cities, particularly for traditionally marginalised and exceedingly vulnerable stakeholders such as children and youth.

In its recognition of the initiatives of youth, UN-HABITAT is pleased to present “*A Policy Dialogue on Youth, Children and Urban Governance*”, which aims to further explore issues of youth participation in decision-making at the local level. This publication comes against a backdrop of initiatives and illustrated tools on youth that UN-HABITAT is implementing on the ground. This includes the establishment of city youth parliaments in Latin America; the development of youth offender profiles at the city level in Asia and the Pacific; and the elaboration of a regional strategy aimed at

addressing the values of citizenship among youth at risk in Africa. UN-HABITAT hopes that cities and youth will take advantage of the Global Campaign and this Policy Paper to enhance youth-friendly cities that meaningfully integrate youth in the development process. I hope that this publication will assist in the further development of integrated local policies and initiatives through which youth organizations and other organizations working with children and young people can complement government efforts in addressing values of citizenship among youth.



Dr. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Policy Dialogue on Youth, Children and Urban Governance represents the collective effort of many people. While the names of everyone who has contributed to its development in so many different ways cannot possibly be listed, there are a number of people and organizations which require special acknowledgement and thanks, for this paper would not exist without their commitments, energy, inputs and ideas:

- **Margaret Shaw**, of the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (Canada) who was the main consultant for this paper
- **The Safer Cities Programme** for providing the main substantive support on behalf of the Campaign on Urban Governance that has made this publication possible. In particular, special acknowledgement to Juma Assiogo, the Youth Focal Point.
- **The Urban Governance Section** for providing the funding that has made this paper possible.
- **The Campaign Flex Team** consisting of staff from the Urban Development Branch (including, the Urban Governance Section, the Disaster Post Conflict and Safety Section, the Sustainable Cities Programme, the Localising MDGs programme) and the Partners and Youth Section for the comments and valuable contributions. In addition, comments from the campaign steering committee, and in particular UNICEF. Special thanks to Mr. Paul Taylor, Chief of the Urban Development Branch and Mohamed Halfani, Chief of the Urban Governance Section for their overall leadership and direction.
- **The Information and Services Section** for reviewing, editing and laying out the publication.
- And most of all, the **many young people** including the Environmental Youth Alliance of Canada and the Youth participants at the 1st Safer Cities International Conference on Youth in Conflict with the Law, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, June 2002 whose contributions advanced the terms of reference and framework upon which this publication has been developed.

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